

Forty-Two Year Mystery Solved!

Seven-Year-Old Arlo Hafen didn't want to wear his shoes to school that beautiful spring morning in 1930. There were plenty of kids who didn't wear shoes to school,



mainly because they didn't have them, but going barefoot was common and Spring Fever coaxed at Arlo to join them. The Great Depression was just beginning, but things in Santa Clara hadn't changed much. Everyone grew and raised all their own food, so

no one went hungry and they didn't have much else anyway. Though Arlo was lucky enough to have a pair of shoes that fit, he tried desperately to convince his mother he didn't need to wear them. When she didn't give in, he minded her decision, put his shoes on and headed toward school.



Somewhere along the short walk, Arlo happened upon the idea of taking off his shoes when he got to school, hiding them somewhere safe, enjoying the day barefoot, and then putting the shoes back on when it was time to go home. He thought this was a wonderful plan and his eyes brightened and his heart beat a little faster as he thought of the perfect place to conceal them.

On the east side of the school, down low to the ground there was a small window-like set back in the building. It was bordered with a cement ledge which was partially concealed behind the stone walls on either side, the space created there would be just wide enough to fit a small pair of uncomfortable leather shoes! This seemed like a good idea to Arlo!

Before the hand bell was rung by one of the older students, and with no one watching, Arlo quickly untied his shoes, set them on the right side of the window ledge and pushed them back just far enough to be invisible to anyone walking by, but still within his 7-year-old reach. His plan went perfectly! Arlo enjoyed the day, ran barefoot at recess and felt quite proud of his clever scheme. When the bell rang and school concluded, Arlo

played marbles with his friends for a few extra minutes on the playground before heading home.

Wisely remembering his shoes, he went to the east side of the building and slipped his hand into the little space to retrieve them. To his utter shock and disbelief, they were gone! He reached in over and over again straining his small arm as far as it could reach, but felt nothing. The shoes had vanished. Someone or something had taken them. It was a long walk home, not because of the distance, but because Arlo made a costly mistake. Not only would his mother be disappointed, but he had lost his shoes, and there would be times when he really needed them. He would have to tell his mother the truth and accept the consequences. Arlo grew up and graduated from BAC with a degree in Elementary Education. His first job was teaching at the Santa Clara School where he attended as a child. He often told family members and students the story about his lost shoes, showing them just where he left them as a young boy, how badly he felt for disobeying his mother and his curiosity about their disappearance. He said that if the building was ever torn down he was going to look for his shoes.

Forty-two years after Arlo lost his shoes, while still teaching the combined 5th and 6th grades at the Santa Clara Elementary School where he was also principal, he got that chance. The school was deemed unsafe according to the current fire code. The school was closed, the teachers were all transferred to the West Elementary in St. George and the students were bussed to the same location.

As the building came down and the dust settled, Arlo knew exactly where to look for his shoes. Digging through the rubble on the east side, he caught sight of one of his long-lost shoes! Weathered and faded, but perfectly intact, he pulled it from the rubble and carefully handled the small shoe.



Arlo felt a sense of closure as he held the little shoe and recalled again, in his sentimental heart, the memory of that day long ago when as a little boy he fancied going barefoot to school. This shoe is on display at the Santa Clara History Museum.

The Santa Clara School building was torn down in 1972 and the property used for expansion of the Santa Ward chapel.



The Santa Clara School in 1913



Arlo John Hafen
1923-2011

Arlo Hafen was a much-loved man in Santa Clara. He served in World War II. As a teacher, he taught us fun songs that we loved to sing, we made Halloween masks from papier mache ‘ (they were very heavy!) He made school Fun!

He also served as bishop in our local LDS ward. His influence is felt by so many of us who grew up in Santa Clara in the 50s, 60s and 70s.